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# **Farm Broadcasters Letter**

United States Department of Agriculture — Office of Communications — Washington, DC 20250-1340

Letter No. 2667

June 17, 1994

**U.S. EXPORT DEMAND** -- United States farm exports are expected to set records this year in the top three U.S. ag export markets, Japan, Canada, and Mexico. U.S. exports to Japan are forecast up 8 percent from 1993 levels to \$9.1 billion, with a 35 percent gain in fruit, nut and vegetable exports. Exports to Canada are forecast at \$5.4 billion, up 4 percent. NAFTA is increasing trade between the countries. Exports to Mexico are expected up 7 percent to \$3.9 billion. NAFTA's elimination of high tariffs have boosted trade across the southern border. U.S. exports to the European Union are forecast down 3 percent, and down 16 percent to the nations of the former Soviet Union. Joel Greene (202) 219-0822.

**RURAL DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE** -- A conference on rural development and telecommunications will be held by USDA in St. Louis, MO, July 11-15. The conference will feature information about how to participate in rural economic development programs of the Rural Electrification Administration (REA), and advanced telecommunications networks for rural schools and hospitals. REA officials will also discuss lending programs for business and industry, water and sewer development programs, the Empowerment Zone and Enterprise Community Program. Conducted in St. Louis at the Adam's Mark Hotel, registration is \$150 for all sessions. REA staff will help with registration by calling (202) 690-3594. Contact: Eileen McMahon (202) 720-1255.

**TOBACCO CONTENT RULE** -- USDA has issued a rule requiring cigarettes manufactured in the U.S. to contain at least 75 percent domestic tobacco. Beginning this year U.S. cigarette manufacturers will be required to pay an assessment and make tobacco purchases if domestic tobacco content falls below 75 percent. The rule applies to U.S. cigarette manufacturers who produce and sell more than one percent of cigarettes sold in the U.S. Contact: Robert Feist (202) 720-6789.

**BIOLOGICAL CONTROL IS WORKING** -- In some years, hordes of crickets have devoured crop and rangeland plants inflicting millions of dollars in damage before being stopped by costly insecticides. A team of USDA and university scientists developed a method to mix a one-celled microbe with wheat bran into cricket bait. The protozoa consume fat in crickets, killing the pests. Infected female crickets lay fewer eggs, which also become infected. The protozoa now infect up to 90 percent of crickets in parts of Idaho and Montana. Contact: Jerome Onsager (406) 994-3344.

**LEAFY SPURGE** -- Bacteria that live in the roots of leafy spurge could be a significant enemy of this deep-rooted rangeland weed. Leafy spurge infests about 2.5 million acres in the northern Great Plains, and costs \$35 million annually in crop losses and chemical controls. USDA scientists have found two beneficial bacteria that harm the weed. In greenhouse tests seedling emergence and root length were reduced by one-half. Agricultural Research Service scientists are conducting field tests this season to evaluate effects of the bacteria on leafy spurge. Contact: Robert Kremer (314) 882-6408.

**COMMUTING TO WORK** -- Latest statistics from the census show that the average commute to work in nonmetro areas is 19 minutes, compared to 23 minutes for workers in metro areas. There has been a large jump, 46 percent, of people taking longer than 30 minutes to get to work, reflecting an increase in residents adjacent to large metro areas. A decrease in the number of jobs in rural areas without a corresponding decline in population appears to have forced a higher proportion of farming-dependent county residents to work at jobs outside their home counties. Nearly one-quarter of rural workers have jobs outside their home county. **Contact: Linda Ghelfi (202) 219-0520.**

**AG TAXES** -- Over two-thirds of farmland owners identify their principal occupation as other than farming. More than half, 53 percent, of real property taxes are paid by these owners. A USDA report, *Taxing Farmland in the United States*, states that Agriculture draws on the resources of, and pays out income to, a much larger community than farm operators. It shows that income flows from the farm communities to other areas and States where land owners work and reside, and investments and real property taxes flow from non-operator land owners to the communities where the farmland is located. Thus, the fluctuations in farm income and value of farm assets may be reflected or absorbed in other sectors of the economy. **Contact: Gene Wunderlich (202) 219-0425.**

**FEWER FARMS PRODUCING MORE** -- In 1935 there were 6.8 million farms in the U.S. In 1990 the number had dropped over two-thirds (69%) to 2.1 million farms. In the 1990's farming accounts for 2.3 percent of all U.S. jobs, about 9 million people, and produces 1.4 percent of the gross domestic product. Despite these modest statistics, agriculture is vital to the U.S. economy. The smaller number of farms fed an expanding nation and in one year, 1990, produced enough for export valued at \$390 billion, generating a trade surplus in ag products of \$16.6 billion. But a USDA publication, *Family Economics Review*, shows that only half (56%) of U.S. farm operators claim farming as their major occupation. Most of the income of the average farm operator household is from off-farm wage and salary jobs. **Contact: Joan Courtless (301) 436-8461.**

**IRRADIATION** -- Recent studies have shown that when consumers learn more about the benefits and safety of irradiation, they're more willing to buy irradiated products. The irradiation process does not make the food radioactive, rather it kills 99 percent of *Salmonella* organisms in the food. *Listeria*, *Campylobacter*, and *E. coli* have similar sensitivities. Although the irradiation process is enough to reduce problems from these pathogens, it's not high enough to sterilize the product. Refrigeration is required. Irradiation may be regarded as a precaution to lessen the risk of bacterial illnesses. **Contact: Judy Harrison (706) 542-8860.**

**COOKING HAZARD** -- Burning charcoal produces carbon monoxide, which has no odor and cannot be seen. Each year about 25 people die and hundreds suffer from carbon monoxide poisoning when they burn charcoal in enclosed areas such as their homes or inside tents when camping. Opening a window or door may not reduce the gas to a safe level. If it rains this summer on your backyard charcoal barbecue, keep the charcoal fire outside. **Contact: Betty Sulvach (804) 371-0866.**



## FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

**AGRICULTURE USA #1932** -- School lunches are being placed on a diet, and are expected to be leaner and even more nutritious. **Lori Spiczka** reports. (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 minute documentary.)

**CONSUMER TIME #1413** -- New fabric products; dangerous blades; spider control; what's in your living room; FDA proposed seafood safety system. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 to 3 minute consumer features.)

**AGRITAPE FEATURES #1924** -- A new military market for farmers; U.S. apples on the way to China; fire ant Achilles heel; drug prevents cryptosporidiosis; attacking bovine tuberculosis.

**UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE** -- Thursday, June 23, agricultural trade update; Friday, June 24, livestock slaughter; Monday, June 27, ag chemical usage; Tuesday, June 28, weekly weather and crop situation; Wednesday, June 29, ag prices. (Weekly reel of features.) These are the **USDA** reports we know about in advance. Our Newsline carries many stories every day which are not listed in this lineup. Please don't let the lack of a story listing keep you from calling.

**USDA RADIO NEWSLINE (202) 488-8358 or 8359**

**COMREX ENCODED (202) 720-2545**

*Material changed at 5 p.m., EDT, each working day.*

## FROM OUR TELEVISION SERVICE

**FEATURES** -- **Pat O'Leary** reports on the 25th anniversary of the Expanded Food & Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP).

**ACTUALITIES** -- USDA assistant secretary **Jim Lyons** on a design guide to make public lands more accessible to more people. Soil Conservation Service chief **Paul Johnson** on the progress of conservation plans for highly erodible cropland. USDA chief meteorologist **Norton Strommen** on the latest weather and crop conditions.

**UPCOMING FEATURES** -- **Pat O'Leary** reports on the exchange of rare plant species between U.S. and Russian scientists. **Lynn Wyvill** reports on food safety tips for the beach and camping.

*On satellite Galaxy 7, transponder 9, channel 9, audio 6.2 or 6.8, downlink frequency 3880 MHz.: Thursdays from 3:45 - 4:00 p.m., ET; Mondays 11:00 - 11:15 a.m., ET.*

## OFFMIKE

**ALFALFA QUALITY**...has been the best since 1991, says **Susan Risinger** (WJAG, Norfolk, NE). Corn and beans are developing well, with few insect problems. Susan says their Saturday morning call-in program with an Extension educator from the University of Nebraska has revealed that the dry conditions this past spring allowed weeds to get a foothold in fields. Weeds give producers another management challenge in allocating resources.

**COTTON**...is developing well; says **Jim Stewart** (KFYO, Lubbock, TX). Rangeland is getting dry and needs moisture. Rains so far have been spotty.

**STREAK MOSAIC VIRUS**...has become visible in the wheat growing region of Montana, says **Brent Stanghelle** (KMON, Great Falls). Extent of infestation won't be known until mid-July. Brent says producers tell him there has been a doubling of cattle being brought across the boarder from Canada. He says producers believe the increase may be in preparation for large contracts coming due next month.

### *Farm Broadcasters Letter*



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Room 528A  
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**ARMY AND CUT WORM**...infestation has been heavy, forcing some producers to replant corn, says **Kevin Jay** (WINU, Highland, IL). Aerial applicators have been doing a brisk business. Kevin says fields are dry and no rain in the forecast through the end of the month. New equipment sales were higher this spring. Dealers could barely keep product on the lot. Kevin says a local dealer told him that when he goes to the coffee shop now he receives harsh looks. The producers need rain to help pay the equipment loans.

**MOVED**...**Dave Sparks** to Dodge City School District public affairs, from KGNO, Dodge City, KS. **Steve Stein** is the new farm director. **Julie Russell**, news director at the stations says hail storms have hit the region. Damage has been spotty.

**LONG HOURS**...in hot conditions can push a producer to become less vigilant about safety, but the dangers of operations near farm equipment last all day long. Talk safety. Keep 'em safe.

**VIC POWELL**  
Office of Communications